

REMARKS

Status of Claims

Claims 1-11, 13-15, 17, 19-34, 36-38, 40, 42-46 and 48-78 are pending in this application, the independent claims being claims 1, 9, 24, 32, 50, 51 and 65. By this Amendment, claims 12, 16, 18, 35, 39 and 41 are canceled, claims 9, 15, 17, 19-21, 32, 38, 40, 42-44, 48 and 49 are amended, and claim 51-76 are newly presented. Claim 47 previously was canceled.

Summary of Official Action

In the Official Action, claims 9-11, 13-17, 19, 20, 32-34, 36, 37, 39, 40, 42, 43, 45 and 46 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b), as anticipated by Japanese Patent Document No. 9-114317 (Yasuhiro).

Reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejections respectfully are requested in view of the above amendments and the following remarks.

Allowed Claims

Initially, Applicant gratefully acknowledges the Examiner's indication that the Application contains allowable subject matter, that claims 1-8, 24-31 and 50 are allowed, and that claims 12, 18, 21-23, 35, 38, 41, 44-46, 48 and 49 are allowable over the prior art (in this regard, Applicant understands that claims 44-46, which depend from allowable claim 49, also are allowable for the same reasons).

Summary of Examiner Interview

Applicant's attorney gratefully acknowledges the courtesies extended to him by the Examiner in several telephone communications on October 26, 2005. In those communications, Applicant's attorney proposed and discussed the amendments to the claims set forth herein, to place the application in condition for allowance, and the Examiner

tentatively indicated that he would enter such proposed amendments to the claims, subject to a formal review of the claims under 35 U.S.C. §112.

Claim Amendments

Without conceding the propriety of the rejections, and solely to advance prosecution of the present application to issue, claim 9 has been amended to include the features of allowable dependent claim 12 (which therefore is canceled herein), claim 32 has been amended to include the features of allowable claim 35 (which therefore is canceled herein), claim 18 has been rewritten in independent form as new claim 51, including the features of base claim 9 and intervening dependent claim 16 (thus claims 16 and 18 are canceled herein), and claim 41 has been rewritten in independent form as new claim 64, including the features of base claim 32 and intervening dependent claim 39 (thus claims 39 and 41 are canceled herein). Accordingly, Applicant submits that independent claims 9, 32, 51 and 64 are allowable over the prior art, and are in condition for allowance.

Dependent claims 15, 17, 19-21, 38, 40, 42-44, 48 and 49 have been amended as to matters of form, in correspondence with the amendments to their respective base claims, as discussed with the Examiner. No new matter has been added.

Claims 10, 11, 13-15, 17, 19-23 and 48, and claims 33, 34, 36-38, 40 42-46 and 49 depend from claims 9 and 32, respectively, and are believed allowable for the same reasons. Moreover, each of these dependent claims recites additional features in combination with the features of its respective base claim, and is believed allowable in its own right. Individual consideration of the dependent claims respectfully is requested.

Newly presented dependent claims 52-63 and 65-76 have been added to provide Applicant with an additional scope of protection commensurate with the disclosure. In this regard, Applicant notes that claims 52-63 and 65-76 recite features that parallel the features of claims 10-15, 17, 19-23 and 48, and claims 33-38, 40, 42-46 and 49, respectively, but

depending from new independent claims 51 and 64. Accordingly, Applicant submits that this limited number of new dependent claims does not add any substantial new issue for consideration. No new matter has been added.

Also, claims 52-63 and 65-76 depend from claims 51 and 65, respectively, and are believed allowable for the same reasons. Moreover, each of these dependent claims recites additional features in combination with the features of its respective base claim, and is believed allowable in its own right. Individual consideration of the dependent claims respectfully is requested.

Entry of Amendment Under 37 C.F.R. §1.116

Entry of the amendments is proper under 37 CFR §1.116 because the amendments: (a) place the application in condition for allowance (for the reasons discussed herein); (b) do not raise any substantial or significant new issue requiring further search and/or consideration (as the amendments amplify issues previously discussed throughout prosecution); (c) satisfy a requirement of form asserted in the previous Office Action; (d) add only a limited number of newly presented claims corresponding to previously considered claims and depending from claims previously indicated to be allowable; and (e) place the application in better form for appeal, should an appeal be necessary. The amendments are necessary and were not earlier presented because they are made in response to arguments raised in the final rejection. Entry of the amendments is thus respectfully requested.

Conclusion

Applicant believes that the present Amendment is responsive to each of the points raised by the Examiner in the Official Action and the telephone interview, and submits that the application is in condition for allowance. Favorable consideration of the claims and passage to issue of the application at the Examiner's earliest convenience earnestly are solicited.

Should the Examiner believe that anything further would be desirable in order to place this application in even better condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number set forth below.

Respectfully submitted,

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JAO:CPW/amw

Attachment:
Amendment Transmittal

Date: November 9, 2005

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